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The Hindutva Turn: Authoritarianism and Resistance in India

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1 Like many other nationalist movements, Hindu nationalism "understand[s] and order[s] the world through 'cultural essentials' of religion, blood, and other practices related to the body—food, marriage, death" (Hansen 1999:11). In what follows, we focus particularly on how blood as a political substance of Hindu nationalism congeals ideology in material forms. Specifically, we trace how blood is imagined and exteriorized by Hindutva leaders and adherents: in ideological texts, in donation camps, through the offering of activists' own blood to political figures, in blood-portraiture of political figures, and in bloodshed during episodes of communal violence.

2 Tracing these imaginations and exteriorizations, we identify three ways in which blood has become a medium and conceptual resource for Hindutva practice. First, we trace how Hindu nationalist ideologues equate blood with the nation's spatial boundaries, demanding that non-Hindus recognize an ancient, essential blood-tie and assimilate back into the Hindu fold. Second, we identify how blood authorizes and legitimizes contemporary acts of Hindu nationalist violence, even as it draws upon existing self-understandings of Hindu non-violence and self-sacrifice. And third, we trace how blood becomes a medium for a retroactive writing of Hindu nationalism into Indian history and the anti-colonial struggle. Across these three strategies, we find a Hindutva politics that produces an essentialized, divisive hematic continuum. By equating the region's past, present and future with Hindu blood, Hindutva ideologues establish spatial and temporal continuities between Hindu nationalism and Indian history and geography. Finally, we offer some brief thoughts on how our considerations of the substance have coalesced in the current Indian government's passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and also in discourses and practices around the Covid-19 pandemic. As Hindutva groups continue to frame the question of citizenship as a matter of a deep historical essentialism, the idea of a shared community of blood legitimizes the linking of consanguinity with geographic boundaries. Similarly, the fraught communal undertones of the idea of donating and spilling blood have become inescapably salient in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. These revivifications are only the most recent

iterations of a long history of how blood has continued to lend material force to shifting configurations of political practice and metaphor.

3 It is an obvious but important point that Hindutva imaginations of blood have to negotiate and reckon with prior meanings and mobilizations of the substance. For example, one particularly significant enactment of blood is its work in marking caste boundaries. In our earlier work, we traced how religious, rationalist, environmental and anti-caste activists differently deploy blood as a metaphor and medium, recognizing the substance's ability to mark difference, while simultaneously aspiring to reconfigure it as a site of consanguinity and reform (Banerjee and Copeman 2018; Copeman and Banerjee 2019).[1] In that work, we argued that such performances of the transgression of prior logics—including those of caste—do not always unravel their hierarchies, but often maintain and reproduce them. This logic recurs in this paper, as Hindutva ideologues seek to elide caste hierarchies and appropriate radical anti-caste visions by discursively espousing a commonality of blood amongst all Hindus. Such an elision obscures the strength of interdictions against the mixing of caste blood. That is, by suggesting an easy already-existing conceptual commonality, Hindutva ideologues reject more radical anti-caste visions, such as those of B.R. Ambedkar, who proposed inter-caste marriages as a critical response to the symbolic power of endogamous reproduction (Ambedkar 2014:499). In this paper, we understand this elision of caste as an absented-presence, demonstrative of how Hindutva actors themselves obfuscate the movement's complicity with upper caste power. Further ethnographic analysis of Hindutva practices of caste-reproduction through blood logics (that which is absented in Hindutva's self-presentation) lies outside the scope of this paper.

Hematic Substrates

Blood Will Always Out

4 Scholarly accounts of the many strands of Hindu nationalism trace its emphasis on Hindu blood back to the writings of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, and in particular to his seminal work on Hindu identity published in 1923: *Hindutva—Who Is a Hindu?* Indeed, the treatise quickly gained in status to become the major twentieth century reference point for the ideological advancement of Hindu nationalism (Chaturvedi 2003:169). As the editor's introduction to the fifth edition of Hindutva explains, "the concept of Hindutva is Savarkar's own...[it stipulates that] the Hindus are tied together by bonds of a common fatherland, ties of blood, a common culture and civilization, common heroes, common history and above all, the will to remain united as a nation" (Chaturvedi 2003:169). Central to Savarkar's definition of Hindu as an ethno-nationalist category are the requirements that one's holy land must lie within India (thereby excluding those who look to Mecca, Palestine, or Rome) and possession of the Aryan-Harappan bloodline (Gittinger 2011:25). As John Zavos (1999) explains, Savarkar's operationalization of blood formed part of a wider Hindu nationalist strategy at the time that rejected the eradication of untouchability, instead promoting "broad signifiers of the Hindu community as a means of encompassing a pluriformity of religious and cultural identities" (P. 73). Untouchability was not to be eliminated but encompassed, and *jati* was to be a touchstone of unity rather than division (Zavos 1999:73):

> The very castes which you, owing to your colossal failure to understand and view them in the right perspective, assert to have barred the common flow of blood into our race, have done so more truly and more effectively as regards the foreign blood than our own. Nay is not the very presence of these present castes a standing testimony to a common flow of blood from a Brahman to a Chandal? (Savarkar 2003:30).

In this, way Savarkar claimed that the caste system was not evidence of hierarchy, but rather an innocent outcome of ancient inter-marriages, the products of which had multiplied caste groups throughout history. The present caste system then was evidence not of an original difference, but rather, of an over-riding ancient blood-community.

5 If Savarkar's utilization of *jati* as a signifier of unity and his reasoning about inter-marriages is confounding, so is his justification of the breaking of caste rules rendering members 'outcaste': "Being outcast from a caste, which is an event of daily occurrence, is only getting incorporated with some other" (Savarkar 1989:88). In this way, as Zavos (1999:74) explains, Savarkar was able to argue for "the overriding commonality of Hindu blood." Indeed, Savarkar repeatedly stated that the racial inheritance of Hindu blood was the most important characteristic of Hindutva (Bhatt 2001:95; see Savarkar 1989:90; 110). The substance bound together past and present Hindus not just biologically, but also affectively.

> We are not only a Nation but a Jati, a born brotherhood. Nothing else counts, it is after all a question of heart. We feel that the same ancient blood that coursed through the veins of Ram and Krishna, Buddha and Mahavir, Nanak and Chaitanya, Basava and Madhva, of Rohidas and Tiruvelluvar courses throughout Hindudom from vein to vein, pulsates from heart to heart. We feel we are a JATI, a race bound together by the dearest ties of blood and therefore it must be so. (Savarkar 1989:89–90)

Discussing Savarkar's emphasis on the emotional resonances of "Hindu blood," Chetan Bhatt (2001) notes how entangling affect and blood was a "paradigmatic example of the necessity of emotional mobilization as central to any ontology of race formation and racial affiliation" (Pp. 95–6). Blood was a powerful bind because according to Savarkar one could lose one's caste, "but never one's Hindutva since, the *blood would always out* and manifest itself as an affective structure in which Hindus would sense their racial affiliation to their ancestors, and hence to all Hindus" (Bhatt 2001:96, emphasis ours).

6 But at the same time, if Hindutva imagined a (non-consensual) incorporation of lower castes, Indian Muslims tested blood's ability to assimilate difference. That is, if untouchables were assimilable because of a shared biosocial tie they had supposedly not relinquished, the allegiance of Indian Muslims to a non-Hindu holy land fundamentally compromised them, even if their blood was also originally Hindu. As Savarkar (1989) explains: "The story of [their conversions to Islam], forcible in millions of cases, is too recent to make them forget, even if they like to do so, that they inherit Hindu blood in their veins." Despite this, "it is clear that though their original Hindu blood is thus almost unaffected by an alien adulteration, yet they cannot be called Hindus" (Pp. 91). That is, unless: "Ye, who by race, by blood, by culture, by nationality, possess almost all the essentials of Hindutva...render whole-hearted love to our common Mother and recognise her not only as Fatherland (Pitribhu) but even as a Holyland (Punyabhu); and ye would be most welcome to the Hindu fold" (P. 115).

7 In a fascinating reading of Hindutva's alimentary politics, Jyotirmaya Sharma (2009) describes how early Hindutva ideologues imagined precisely this process of literally incorporating Muslims—who shared Hindu blood but yet refused assimilation into a Hindu holy land. For example, Sharma describes how in retrospective writings about his imprisonment, Savarkar criticized his fellow Hindu inmates for refusing food offered by non-Hindus, alleging that Muslims not only took but snatched food from Hindu communities. In response, Savarkar urged Hindus to, in turn, cultivate their own communal power to digest and incorporate the Muslim other. Sharma then details Savarkar's imagination of assimilation through bodily incorporation, as it manifests in a series of Savarkar's poems celebrating Hindu deities defeating demonic Muslim enemies. In these poems, Savarkar created an imaginative world in which Hindu warriors fed their hunger with the body of Muslims, bathing themselves and their motherland in the other's blood (Pp. 163–4).[2] Thus, blood operates in Savarkar's writing as evidence of an original Hindu-Muslim consanguinity, at the same time as it portends violence and death if Muslims do not give themselves over for incorporation into a Hindu body politic. This metaphoric doubling of blood is sharpened in the writings of M.S. Golwalkar, the second leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), gaining particular salience in the aftermath of the partition of India.[3] Like Savarkar, Golwalkar argued that even if Indian Muslims' allegiance to a foreign land compromised them, their original, shared blood tie with Hindus could serve as a conduit for their re-entry into a Hindutva fold, as long as they relinquished their recent conversions and new beliefs. However, as with Savarkar, inclusion slips easily into accusation. Echoing Savarkar, Golwalkar described the creation of Pakistan as an act of Muslims literally eating the Hindu body politic, the only response to which was for Hindus to regain their capacity for digesting outsiders (Sharma 2009:150–1). Thus, if Muslims needed to be reminded that "we are all one people and it is the same blood that courses in our veins [...]" (Golwalkar cited in Ahmed 2017), such a reminder could only be issued if Hindus reacquainted themselves with a hunger for blood and sacrifice.

8 The influence of this brand of hematic reasoning remains strong today, when shared blood continues to delegitimize Muslim beliefs and difference, leading to threats of their violent re-incorporation into a Hindu fold. The present RSS leader Mohan Bhagwat recently reiterated that "Muslims in India must realise that their forefathers were Hindus, who eventually converted to Islam" (Golwalkar cited in Ahmed 2017). And it is entirely conventional in mainstream Indian political discourse to encounter claims such as those made by the former RSS leader K. Sudarshan that: "The blood flowing in the veins of Indian Muslims is the same as Lord Rama and Krishna...in a true sense, both Lord Rama and Krishna are ancestors of Indian Muslims."[4] This common political parlance *insists* upon inclusiveness. Former Indian Defense Minister George Fernandez (a Christian), for example, declares that "I look at a Pakistani as the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood."[5] A former leader of the RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) similarly asserted that "Muslims are the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood but they never got their rightful share in the nation's development[...]."[6] The incorporative-digestive politics of Savarkar and Gowalkar thus continues to find new articulations, recomposed for contemporary circumstances.

9 As Savarkar and Golwalkar made clear, such seemingly inclusive and assimilative rhetoric insinuates that if Indian Muslims do not accede to this recognition of a Hindu biological substrate, they become legitimate targets of violence. After the catastrophic

communal violence of 2002 in Gujarat, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Praveen Togadia is reported to have declared that "India's Muslims should submit to genetic tests. Since the forefathers of Muslims are Hindus, how can the blood of Arabia flow in their blood? I advise all Muslims to get tested for their Hindu origin."[7] Religion ceases to refer either to belief or practice, but simply to blood; the blood of Arabia does not flow in their veins, they are "mere" converts. This hematic vision of Hindutva resembles what has been identified as the medicalization of kinship through which "Biomedicine insists on uniting those who may not choose to be connected" (Finkler 2001:239). Blood, in such conceptions, holds and fixes a set of connections, with the VHP leader turning to biomedicine and blood tests in order to attempt to enforce coercive inclusion. Hindutva rhetoric relies on the idea that one cannot be displaced from one's original "nature," located in and revealed by the blood. In this appeal to blood as consummate repository of indisputable knowledge, the body appears paradoxically as both prior to and the locus of religion. "Prior" in the sense that biomedical examination of the bodies of Muslims reveals that they are in fact not Muslims, and "locus" in the sense that it is in bodies that religion is nonetheless to be found.

10 In 2002 *The Milli Gazette*, which styles itself as Indian Muslims' leading English newspaper, prefaced an interview with Togadia with an intriguingly positive take on blood ties as the locus of a hopeful future:

> Dr Pravin Togadia comes from the noble profession of healing and professes to be a believer in the nobler ideas of Hinduism. Yet, he would not pause for a moment before making uncharitable remarks against Islam and Muslims. He holds Indian Muslims responsible for atrocities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and, in the same breath, Kashmir. That, to him, is justification enough for the two-month-long Gujarat carnage. Distribution of a million trishuls at kumbh, followed by similar trishul-distribution campaigns at other places in India, fire arms training to Bajrang Dal cadres and repeated attacks on Muslim passengers in Sabarmati Express (pre-designed to provoke a dangerous conflict) by VHP storm-troopers in days preceding Godhra, which have brought the country to the precipice, do not bother him at all. However, there is still a silver lining in the darkness of hate: *Dr Togadia does recognise the shared ancestry of Indian Muslims and Hindus. All of us know that blood is thicker than water, and a day might come when this burning rage fuelled by angry people like Dr Togadia would cool down and blood ties would reassert themselves* (our emphasis).[8]

Recall Togadia's statement that India's Muslims must have their blood tested to demonstrate that "the blood of Arabia" does not flow in them. What is divisive in his speech—a means of underscoring a putative Islamic aberration (deviance from blood) as a justification for persecution—is instead taken by the editors of the *Milli Gazette* (2002) as indicative of a divorce between code (the moral, normative) and substance (blood) that *may only be temporary*: for "a day might come" when "blood ties would reassert themselves." If for Togadia the proper biomorality of blood is grounded in an original Hindu-ness, for the editors of the *Milli Gazette*, the recognition of a shared blood implies the legitimacy of difference, both past and present.

11 In employing the terms "substance" and "code" here we refer to the work of kinship theorist David Schneider as employed by McKim Marriott. In Schneider's (1980) analysis, American kinship was a symbolic system resting on the two contrasting but mutually dependent elements of shared biogenetic substance (blood) and social code

(contractual love that legitimated and reproduced blood ties). Contrarily, Marriott argued that in Indian kinship, "substance" (blood) did not oppose "code" (the moral, normative), but all aspects of reality were natural and moral at the same time. For instance, caste boundaries continue to be maintained through restrictions on who eats and drinks with whom. Yet Marriott's ethnosociology has come under criticism for the inflexibility and ahistoricity of its analysis—the result of which was to mistake norm for practice. Our own approach, developed in our wider work (Copeman and Banerjee 2019), is to argue for the continued usefulness of Marriott's schematic categories, but only if they are detached from an ahistorical, rule-bound and exclusively Hindu universe, and the *Milli Gazette* piece is a case in point. Marriott (1976) states that code and substance "cannot have separate existences in [the] world of constituted things as conceived by most South Asians" (Pp. 110)." But it is precisely their separate existences that come into focus in the disagreement between Togadia and the editors of the *Milli Gazette*. Both sides present contrasting visions of what the proper relation between code and substance should be: Togadia stresses an essential blood-tie that is prior to and erases contemporary religious difference, while the editors legitimize and authorize religious difference *through* an invocation of the same blood-tie. For the editors, the present scenario (the piece was written soon after the massacres of Muslims in Gujarat) is marked by bloodshed, not blood ties. Their hope in these times of political division is that substance and code might be reunited. Even amidst devastating bloodshed, hematic visions of substantial community retain their power.

12 Crucially, the editors' vision of reuniting substance and code is undercut by Togadia in the interview that follows the preface: "all Hindus and Muslims should accept one reality—that we are ethnically and culturally the same. No one from the Hindu-Muslim society must suffer German-Jew paradigm. Each and every Muslim of India emanates ancestorily from the gene, RBC, bone, blood and flesh of a Hindu." The Gazette's reconciliatory gesture toward a future where substance-code may be reunited is compromised by Togadia's assertion of the prior purity of Hindu blood, a norm from which Muslim blood can only deviate. Here, then, shared blood takes the form of an accusation. It signifies only deviation and aberrancy.

13 But the idiom is flexible. For instance, Sangh Parivar activists in northeast India who are seeking to recruit local traditions, including Christian ones, into their vision of a greater Hindu nation reference shared blood less as accusation and more as exhortation. Arkotong Longkumer (2017:213) reports the hematic refrain employed by members of the Kalyan Ashram, an RSS offshoot, as they relegate both indigenous religions and Christianity to a status of mere belief: "In emphasising the common 'Hindu' identity that is beyond mere 'worship,' the goal of the Kalyan Ashram is to stress that 'Nagas are our blood brothers' and by extension part of [a] Hindu orbit that is familial, territorial, and civilizational." Importantly, such a demarcation of Hinduism that foregrounds nationalist "blood and soil" is sanctioned by Indian law. Rupa Viswanath (2014:144–45) cites Derrett (1968:52), who explains that "the legal test of whether a person is a Hindu...starts with ethnic and geographical tests, which...can be rebutted not by proof of absence of belief or presence of disbelief but only by proof of exclusive adherence (or conversion) to a foreign (i.e. a non-Hindu) faith." Which is to say, as Viswanath (2014) puts it, that "anyone practising or professing anything at all, so long as she refrains from explicitly adhering to Christianity or Islam—even a

committed atheist—is, legally speaking, a Hindu" (P. 145). Fascinatingly, Longkumer's Hindutva activist informants in the northeast suggest that even explicit adherents of Christianity (though not of Islam) may retain membership of the Hindu fold, because of their hemato-civilizational substrate.

"May Allah help RSS to grow"

14 The RSS' preoccupation with blood is more than conceptual, it flows into material forms: for example, the organization runs several blood banks, and the movement's auto-hagiographies accord them a privileged place. One RSS publication notes that "the RSS runs many blood banks, and the director of the Pune-based unit served as the Secretary General of the Indian Society of Blood Transfusion Units. The RSS blood banks conduct public education programs on blood donation as well and distribute literature on AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases."[9] The phenomenon is visible as much in the diaspora as at home: "when there was a major fire explosion in a factory near Kuala Lumpur many HSS volunteers were pleasantly surprised to see that many *swayamsewak* brothers from other *shakha*s had come to government hospital to donate blood. All these happened spontaneously without any word from *adhikaris*" (Kumar 2017:80).[10] Meanwhile, another Hindutva-inspired tract describes blood donation drives "carried out [by the RSS and its close affiliates] on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti in Hong Kong, Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok etc." (Kumar 2017:80; 81). As Gwilym Beckerlegge (2015:226) explains, it was the second RSS supremo M.S. Golwalkar who placed great emphasis on "selfless service" activities partially as a means of rehabilitating the RSS after its proscription in the aftermath of Gandhi's assassination. It is interesting to note how those same *seva* activities now reach out to remember and enfold the very icon whose killing's association with the RSS they were instituted, in part, to draw a veil over.

15 RSS blood donation camps allow the organization to portray itself as an integrative force, an exemplar of selflessness and inclusion. Its patriotic blood collection is for the good of the whole nation; they "make no religious distinction in such matters" (Seshadri 1998:211). A story used to illustrate this tenet of RSS ideology relates to a Muslim man in Chennai who needed blood for his ten-year-old daughter who was undergoing surgery:

> He approached his relatives for blood who did not oblige. The others demanded Rs. 300 per bottle which he could not afford. When the Muslim gentleman reported his predicament to the surgeon, himself a Christian, he advised him to approach the RSS workers... On his approaching the Sangh Karyalaya [the local RSS branch], he was immediately assured of help and six bottles of blood were procured on the day of operation. After the operation he wrote a letter to the Sangh Karyalaya saying, 'Indeed you gave life to my daughter. May Allah help RSS to grow.' (Seshadri 1998:211)

16 Former RSS Vice-President H.V. Seshadri's recounting of the episode is revealing of the starkly double-edged nature of the RSS's inclusiveness. If it is employed to demonstrate how *swayamsevak*s make no religious distinction, the episode as recounted here marks a distinction between those who are willing to donate the substance (Hindus) and those who decline to do so (Muslims); between those who are willing to transcend and to donate their blood across religious divides in the cause of a common humanity (Hindus)

and those unwilling to donate even for one of their own (Muslims); between those who donate selflessly without seeking a return (Hindus) and those who will donate only for commercial gain (Muslims).[11] In this way, an act claiming to transcend divisions in fact serves to mark them further. Even a Christian surgeon, belonging to another community whose patriotic loyalties are to be suspected, acknowledges the selfless service of the *swayamsevak*s. A Delhi-based RSS volunteer and pamphleteer who has conducted stints coordinating its *seva* activities in the capital echoed Seshadri's words in explaining to us the

> civilizational gap between Hindus and Muslims. Though they are the blood of our blood, flesh of our flesh, there is a wild difference in sentimentality. For Muslims there is—there can be—no diversity. Hindus are for diversity, and they will donate their blood for Muslims; but with Muslims it is not the same...What is their idea? I don't know. They are secluding themselves and it is a self-made seclusion.

Hindus, then, will donate blood for Muslims ("the blood of our blood"), but not the other way around. In this way, the Hindu blood donation comes to mirror and reify the prior tie or flow—the biological substrate that marks India as a Hindu nation.

17 To elaborate, subtly present in Seshadri's retelling are sentiments that recall the teachings of Savarkar and Golwalkar about the common (Hindu) blood that India's Hindus and Muslims share. If it is a longstanding Hindu nationalist trope to ask the Muslim to recall that "you also belong to the same race as ours, to the same blood of ours" (Golwalkar 2000:122), blood donation from Hindus to Muslims establishes this trope in practice. That is, the Hindu blood donation mobilizes the constitutive force of blood as the (metaphoric) substance of the already existing racial tie binding Muslims and Hindus, which is literalized by way of what becomes an exterior mirroring of a prior interior connection.[12] But rather than a literalization or reminder of shared blood under a Hindu sign, what the episode recounted by Seshadri and others like it suggests is instead a further hematic distinction: for if Hindutva groups insist on a shared Hindu and Muslim blood, the division between them is reasserted in Muslims' alleged refusal to acknowledge this fact.

Swadeshi blood

18 Dr. Keshav Hedgewar, who founded the RSS in 1925 and is often referred to by his followers as "Doctorji," is intimately tied to contemporary Hindutva symbolics of blood donation. Writing of Hedgewar—"the Hindu ideal of man in flesh and blood"—Golwalkar (2000) describes the particular temporality of his life-as-sacrifice: Hedgewar's sacrifice, unlike those who "sacrifice their lives in a flash of martyrdom," "was a steady and consuming fire stretched over the entire period of his youth." Indeed, "to burn oneself every moment of one's life in order to light up countless other hearts is a *tapasya* [austerity] of the highest order" (P. 354). But he did not just burn, his blood was drained, and his body cut open for the nation:

> Like Shibi of the olden days Doctorji cut his own flesh bit by bit in order to protect the 'dove' of society. Like Dadhichi, who gave his bones to be forged into a deadly weapon to slay the demon Vritasura, Doctorji too smilingly transfused his life-blood to society till the last drop. That was how Shankaracharya died at the age of thirty-two, Vivekananda at thirty-nine

> and Shivaji at fifty. Doctorji too died at fifty. And it is they who live eternally! (Golwalkar 2000:354)

It is appropriate, then, that the most notable of several RSS blood banks is named after Dr Hedgewar. Based in Nagpur, it has as its slogan "For the sake of the nation, we must donate our blood." The bank seeks explicitly to differentiate itself from other more dominant organizations in the country—especially the Red Cross, which dominates the landscape of blood donation in Delhi and other major metropolitan centers. A Delhi-based RSS representative of the Dr Hedgewar Blood Bank told us that "blood donation in India till now has been based on Christian humanitarian ethics, especially when you look at the Red Cross, but this blood bank is inspired by Hindu ethics of sacrifice as taught in the Vedas." Similarly, each of the *swayamsevak*s we spoke with about the blood bank was quick to contrast its ethos with that of the Indian Red Cross. We were told that "the Red Cross Society is a Christian concept. It is not Hindu. It comes from Europe, which is Christian. We like the Red Cross. A sense of humanism is invoked, so we co-operate. But blood donation should not be commercialized, and it should not be an elite concept." Another *swayamsevak* elaborated on the matter of commercialism:

> There is a danger of blood donation camps being globalized and commercialized. If we have a surplus then maybe we can export to other countries, but we do not. In addition to sacrifice, anti-commercialization is a Hindu concept. Serving and saving humanity is our first and last duty as a human being. In Hinduism there is, number one, a sense of sacrifice, and, number two, a sense of global brotherhood. It is a Christian concept that the whole world is a market. First the Christian west colonized the world militarily, and now it is through economics that it colonizes—they commercialize everything. Commercialism penetrates our land. The resilience of our country to imports and commercialism is important. We can resist by creating alternatives. The Red Cross does a good job in many ways, but it cannot have a social sensitivity. The Dr Hedgewar Blood Bank, on the other hand, creates a sense of participation of the people. It is a blood store for the most common, ordinary people.[13]

The Red Cross is thus characterized as a foreign hand signifying commercialism and the potential export of Indian blood under a Christian sign. It does not have, indeed as a foreign import, *cannot* have "a social sensitivity." The Dr. Hedgewar Blood Bank, on the other hand, is neo-*swadeshi* nationalist and communitarian. The volunteer does not state explicitly that Red Cross Society blood banks are commercial enterprises, and let us be clear, they are not. Delhi's Red Cross blood bank, alongside government hospital blood banks, is the least commercial blood bank in the city.[14] It is, of course, much less its actions than its provenance in the commercial Christian west that makes it suspect: the problem is the "cross" in Red Cross and also its rootless "globalism." We can think here of the Hindu Right's "broader critique of the rise of non-government organizations and their dangerous ability...to wrest effective sovereignty from the nation" (Cohen 2008:42). No evidence is offered of the "Christian commercialism" of the Red Cross; it is guilty simply by association and by virtue of its name. Similarly in respect of the reference to exporting Indian blood, no hard accusation is made; just an insinuation that is redolent of Golwalkar's (2000:159) complaint concerning the Christian modus operandi in foreign climes: "Jesus had called upon his followers to give their all to the poor, the ignorant and the downtrodden. But what have his followers done in practice? Wherever they have gone, they have proved to be not 'blood-givers' but 'bloodsuckers.'"

19 It was in an interview with another *swayamsevak* affiliated with the RSS blood bank that the subtleties of the accusation of commerce became more apparent. The volunteer began with a commonplace concerning the genius of Hindu charity:

> When Hindus give there is no intention to get anything in return—we give wholeheartedly. In the Dr. Hedgewar Blood Bank, it is like this. While we are donating blood, we do not see which caste, religion or creed the recipient is. We just donate the blood—we ask for nothing and we do not know anything."

Without prompting, he then proceeded to compare this Hindu approach with that of the Red Cross:

> If anyone is needy, we donate. We need no favor for this. Sacrifice is in our blood. A mother serves and nourishes her son, and the son doesn't pay her anything. Hindu service for others is like that between mother and son. The Red Cross does a lot in blood banking, a lot. But it is a different kind of service. When a nurse serves a sick person, she takes money – it is a commercial service. In Christianity the world is only perfect when it is Christian. In Hinduism all human beings are perfect in themselves so there is no need to change anyone. Therefore, service doesn't need a return.

While the insinuation here that the Red Cross has commercialized and corrupted blood banking is baseless, the *swayamsevak*s' accusations are nonetheless revelatory about Hindutva's hematic imagination. For Hindutva activists, as we have seen, medical blood donation is inseparable from understandings of blood as the substance of kinship and material substrate sustaining ethnic and religious differences. Such understandings come together in a unique conjunction with the Hindutva variant of the *swadeshi* movement, which criticizes "foreign" elements such as the Red Cross in India partly from an economic nationalist standpoint. Originally a Gandhian anti-colonial strategy, the RSS resuscitated *swadeshi* in the form of the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch pressure group in 1991 as a response to contemporaneous government policies of deregulation and privatization.[15] The accusation of commercialism and an espoused commitment to an anti-globalist agenda acts as a surrogate for a further accusation; viz. that Christian service can never be separated from that religion's conversion agenda. Christian service can only ever take the form of a commercial transaction; it enacts a commerce in souls.[16]

20 Thus, on the one hand Hindutva workers accuse Christians of seeking to convert inhabitants of a country who are all originally Hindu, tied together by an ancient blood-tie. On the other, they find commerce as the underlying motive of this impulse to convert. In response, they propose a *swadeshi* purification of the originally Hindu body politic. In this light, the role of the Dr. Hedgewar Blood Bank comes to look like a biomedical equivalent of the *shuddhi* reconversion/purification rituals performed by much older prototype Hindu nationalist groups. Though the Hindu Right intensified its rhetoric about demographic threats from minority communities in the 1990s, the trope itself and attendant forms of reasoning and propaganda have their origin in the late nineteenth-century anti- and re-conversion activities of the Arya Samaj and related Hindu revivalist and reform movements (Bhatt 2001:21; see also Beckerlegge 2015:216–7). In the contemporary iteration of demographic strengthening and purification through a literal hematic re-incorporation, blood plays a crucial role. And as the work of the Hedgewar Blood Bank makes clear, blood banks themselves must be brought

back from under the sign of the cross into the Hindu fold: a container of *swadeshi* blood must be contained in a *swadeshi* blood bank.

21 The synthesis of such logics found their clearest expression in 2008 when a Maharashtrian guru with close links to the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (see Anderson 2015) was reported to have marked his readmission of "309 persons...to Hindu Dharma" by means of a blood donation camp.[17] Recall that readmission to the Hindu fold involves *recollecting* that one possesses Hindu blood (the problem, as framed by Savarkar and Golwalkar, is precisely the hematic memory lapse of Indian Christians and Muslims). Once more we witness the mirroring of flow that forms the logic of hematic literalization: a common interior blood flow, recollected and acknowledged in the act of readmission, made visible and mirrored in exterior flows. If Savarkar and Golwalkar worked to establish a deep, ancient blood tie that marked the subcontinent's inhabitants as originally Hindu, contemporary blood banks continue their mission, working *through* blood as a material form in order to erase difference, or at least make difference deviant. Blood flows through and across donation events and camps, working simultaneously at conceptual and material registers to integrate those who have deviated from an original blood-tie back into the Hindutva fold. At times and towards some groups, the Hindutva will to re-establish an equation between Hindu blood and land takes the form of exhortations to reform. At other times and towards other groups presumed to have deviated too far from the original blood-tie, this drive to purity manifests in violent threats of erasure.

Mediating Violence and Non-Violence

Hematic Virility

22 Historically, another way that Indian Muslims have been marked as pathologically different through blood is for their alleged inclination towards bloodshed. This Muslim propensity towards bloodshed serves as a foil to descriptions of Hindus nobly averse to shedding blood. For example, *vaids* (Indian Brahmin healers) in the early twentieth century employed the relative hematic propensities of Ayurvedic medicine (coded as Hindu) to delegitimize Unani traditions (coded as Islamic). Rachel Berger presents the case of the influential *pandit* and *vaid* Shaligram Shastri, whose 1931 report for United Provinces government officials described Unani in macabre terms as preoccupied with hemorrhaging or bloodletting: practices considered to be wholly unsuited for "Hindu" bodies, even if they may be appropriate to "foreign" (viz. Islamic) ones (Berger 2013:89). Deepak Mehta (2000) shows how Muslims might in fact accede to Shastri's hematic binary categorization, while reversing the moral terms. The ritual wound that Muslim males bear—which is both of and exceeds the body—engenders pain and blood. Hindus, on the other hand, only get cut in hospital, but there is no spirituality in that (Mehta 2000:92). Indeed, they (Hindus) lack purity precisely "because they are afraid of shedding their blood" (Mehta 2000:92–3). Meanwhile, Golwalkar also contrasted different religious communities according to an axis of willingness to shed blood:

> Hindusthan lived a life of unchallenged glory and power for thousands of years and spread its spiritual and cultural effulgence over vast areas of the globe [...] Never has its flag waded towards military victory through the

> blood and tears of those races as it happened with Islam and Christianity when they spread to new countries. Its victory had always been moral and cultural. (cited in Barua 2017:2).

23 A further chilling contrast emerges amidst an episode of communal violence in stereotypes concerning preferred means of killing: if Hindus burn their victims, Muslims stab them because "Muslims are able to 'withstand the sight of blood'" (Ghassem-Fachandi 2006:308). At the same time, however, there were calls to, so to speak, sanguinize Hinduism as a means of countering British claims of Hindu effeminacy, and to demonstrate Hindu virility in the face of an Islamic threat. In particular, the Hindu Mahasabha launched a wholesale project to fortify Hindu masculinity as a "basis for the regeneration of a strong Hindu nation" (Ghassem-Fachandi 2006:24). In addition to the glorification of martial heroes such as Shivaji, suggestions included the building of akharas and temples to Hanuman in every village, and the reintroduction of animal sacrifice to reacquaint Hindus with the taste for blood that they had supposedly lost. At the 1923 session of the Mahasabha, for instance, "Since the weak, pacific, and cowardly Hindus had been overrun by the aggressive and violent Muslims, B.S. Moonje called for the reinstallation of the Vedic practice of animal sacrifice so that Hindus would become hardened to the sight of blood and killing" (Ghassem-Fachandi 2006:24). Something of this sensibility was apparent in Nathuram Godse's rejection of Gandhian ahimsa because it "would ultimately result in the emasculation of the Hindu Community" (Godse 1977:7). Shiv Sena activists also view Gandhi as the epitome of "emasculated India" (Heuze 1992:2260). Shiv Sainiks, instead, see themselves as "people of blood" (Heuze 1992:2261). Indeed blood, as Heuze shows, is at the heart of Sainiks' project for regenerating the "emasculated community-nation" (Heuze 1992:2259). While Gandhi's aversion to blood is nowhere near as straightforward as suggested in these accounts (see Copeman and Banerjee 2019:46–85), this is nonetheless Gandhi's status amongst adherents of Hindutva-based ideologies.

24 Dibyesh Anand's (2011) ethnography further reveals how the prevalent Hindu Right equation of pacifism with impotence is figured across a range of Hindu Right figures and tracts, precisely as a problematic of the blood; specifically, Hindu blood, frozen over, is castigated as being incapable of generating the necessary masculine heat for defending Hindu interests. Regaining a lost virility is equated with making Hindu blood boil once more. As one VHP sadhu complained at a rally in Hardwar, "*Hinduon ka khoon thoda thanda ho gaya hai* [The blood of Hindus has cooled down]" (Anand 2011:85). A VCD documenting the exploits of "Ram bhaktas" killed in the cause of construction of a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya recites the slogan: "*jis hindu ka khoon na khole, woh khoon nahin paani ha* [a Hindu whose blood does not boil, has no blood but water]" (Anand 2011:134). Soon after the Godhra incident in Gujarat in 2002, the BJP youth wing in Delhi chanted: "*Jis Hinduon ka khoon na khola, woh Hindu nahin, woh hijra hain* [Those Hindus whose blood does not boil, are not Hindus, they are eunuchs]" (Anand 2011:146).[18] More recently, stirring up a nationalist frenzy in the days before his re-election, Modi invoked an attack on the Indian military in Kashmir, insisting that "The blood of the people is boiling!" (Filkins 2019).[19]

25 Similarly preoccupied with asserting their hemo-virility, Shiv Sainiks go further still in pursuing plural and diverse encounters with blood which fuse together different modes and ideologies of bloodshed. Connections are generated between a world in which (communal) bloodshed is rife, and in which Sainiks are, of course, deeply implicated,

and their own founding of a blood bank, alongside their willingness to donate the substance and to oversee its distribution. Indeed, for some in the organization "the fresh blood of the Shiv Sainiks will regenerate the old blood of the nation" (Heuze 1992:2261). Sainiks, says Heuze (1992), are

> fascinated by blood as a means of fostering a brotherhood in battle and founding a nation, but they also, and perhaps more significantly maintain a blood bank which has no medical equivalent in the city. Rather than a reversion to passion, as regularly denounced by the recognised adversaries of 'fundamentalism', this would represent a new articulation of passion and reason, a dynamic disposition oriented towards short-term social and political effectiveness in the framework of a violently transformed world, which one might see exemplified in the formation of the Shiv Sena. (P. 2261)

Given our own findings concerning widespread fears harbored by Indian men about the emasculating effects of donating their blood (impotence, infertility, weakness—see Copeman 2009a; Copeman and Banerjee 2019), it is even more intriguing to note Sainiks' connecting together of bloodshed, including their own, with virility. Yet we do not see a contradiction between the blood donation's potential to emasculate and make virile. For if men do not donate the substance because they feel they have too little of it (*khuun ki kami*), or because they believe it to be irrecoverable (viz. it is like donating a kidney), or because it will render them infertile or impotent, then in fact enacted donation of blood forms a masculine demonstration of substantial abundance; viz. one has enough of the substance to donate it and still to retain one's masculinity.[20] So while the act can emasculate—"I can't donate as I'm getting married next month"—equally it can demonstrate substantive masculinity if one nonetheless goes ahead and donates. The Facebook page of a Jalandhar-based blood donors association is indicative of this aspect of the masculinity of blood donation.[21] It consists of photographs glorifying individual blood donors as they donate. Every donor depicted is male, and each photograph contains the words "Blood Commando" and the number of times they have donated emblazoned over. In several of the photographs the donor poses to flex his muscles even as his blood departs from them. A local gym advertises on the page: blood donors get 15 days free. Here the number of times one has given blood is the gauge of one's masculinity, precisely a mark of vigor rather than its exhaustion. We suggest that Shiv Sainiks' willingness to donate despite the widespread belief in its weakening effects serves as a demonstration of their excessive manliness—that they have enough masculine substance to spare for, so to speak, *re*-masculating "the community-nation."

The RSS's Blood

26 This hematic revivification of the nation is a major theme within Hindutva blood donation activities, but it is important to remember that Hindutva organizations are not the only political outfits to memorialize nationalist sacrifices via blood donation: Indian soldiers who died in the 1999 India-Pakistan Kargil conflict are remembered annually through blood donation camps staged in their honor by a variety of different political movements; the same is true for the policemen who were killed defending the Indian Parliament building (Lok Sabha) when it was attacked by militants in 2002. For donor recruiter Dr. Ajay Bagga from Hoshiarpur, Punjab state, it is "the memory of the bullet-ridden, blood-soaked body of his father [a political leader in the Punjab Pradesh Janata Party, who was assassinated by militants in 1984] which propelled him towards

the blood donation movement."[22] The commemoration of bloodshed for the nation through acts of blood donation shares at least partial structural affinity with quite conventional sacrificial logics: in remembering blood sacrifice through blood donation, the deaths of the soldiers and policemen are regenerative in precipitating blood donations that will plant 'the seed of new life and a guarantee of continuity' (Parry 2015). Such blood donation camps are both expressive and constitutive of the soldier's role more generally—his bloodshed ensures the continuity of the nation. Blood donation, in these contexts, embodies the extensibility of blood sacrifice for the nation. Different orders of blood shedding—the soldier's blood sacrifice and the citizen's blood donation—are analogically transferable.

27 We suggest that the soldierly comparison is germane to certain tensions within Hindutva. Christophe Jaffrelot (2007:300) notes how in 1965 and 1971, when India was at war with China and East Pakistan respectively, "RSS volunteers offered their services to maintain law and order in Delhi and to donate blood." Similarly, the RSS is reported to have collected more than 10,000 liters of blood to aid the Indian troops during the 1999 Kargil war. "More blood than they bloody knew what to do with," laughed one *swayamsevak* (Alter 2000:147). In other words, the RSS is quick to organize blood donation camps at times when the nation is at war, with the express intent that the donated blood be used by the Indian armed forces as necessary. We have discussed elsewhere (Copeman 2008) an RSS volunteer from a Jain background who was proud of his role in helping the RSS collect blood during the Kargil war. Organizing blood for the army helped him mediate between the different imperatives of ahimsa and RSS militarism. Drawing on James Laidlaw's (1995) suggestion that Jain attitudes to non-violence are characterized by an "ethic of quarantine," we argued that what mattered to this worker was not preventing violence from happening (for violence is simply inevitable) but avoiding being violence's proximate cause. Similarly, with blood donation, even as it is an act of literal bodily connection, by virtue of its anonymity it is also one of disconnection. Anonymity and distance allow donors to avoid becoming the proximate cause of violence, while at the same time allowing them to participate in the symbolic flows of bleeding for the nation. It offers donors a more remote and supple role, allowing those who profess non-violence to nonetheless distally engage in arenas of violence.

28 The argument précised above was made in reference to a single Jain *swayamsevak*, but it helps to differentiate a range of Hindutva positions vis-à-vis blood donation and bloodshed. By no means are all Hindutva organizations alike (see e.g. Anderson 2015). Different attitudes to blood and its shedding mark boundaries between the highly differentiated sets of groups and alliances that cohere under the banner of Hindutva. For example, under the headline "this page exposes the evil forces that are against the Hindu people," the website of the VHP youth group the Bajrang Dal contained a hit list animated by garishly red, dripping blood.[23] This is not the kind of thing one would find in RSS literature, though one will certainly find references to its blood donation activities and to the symbolism of blood sacrifice for the nation: many RSS men point to the communal violence of Partition "as a kind of patriotic baptism, an initiation through blood and sacrifice to the nationalist cause, for the individuals involved as well as for the corporate RSS body" (Hansen 1999:95), and we discuss below RSS texts that refer to "feel[ing] a wave of sacrifice in one's mind" and the desire to "touch the blood-red soil" of places of Hindu martyrdom. Since its banning and stigmatization after the

assassination of M.K. Gandhi, the RSS has sought to project a "respectable" image (Hansen 1999:96), with a focus on the cultivation of Hindu discipline and character building, leaving the work of bloodshed and mass action to other affiliated and non-affiliated organizations. But if acts or encouragements of bloodshed are dangerous for the RSS—the dripping red hit list for example—the *symbolism* of blood sacrifice for the nation is perfectly permissible. We can see this bifurcation along hematic lines in the Ram Janmabhumi movement. As was widely reported, Bajrang Dal activists mobilized an array of strikingly bloody sacrificial practices during the procession: not merely lofty rhetoric concerning sacrifice for the nation or representations of excorporation, but actual excorporations—for instance, offering L.K. Advani cups of their own blood, and tilaks of the same substance during the politician's notorious *rath yatra*. Yet, such sacrifices are not consonant with Advani's Brahmanical RSS background, nor with the RSS's cultivation of an aura of responsibility, sobriety and discipline. As a result, the young activists were sent word to desist (Davis 1996:30). No doubt Advani's refusal came from a concern to maintain his image as a respectable upper-class urban Hindu and to avoid a too-obvious culpability for the violence to come. Yet it is also again clear that different attitudes towards blood and its sacrifice marked a division between the "hard" and "soft" lines of Hindutva. A recent RSS publication represents well the public impression it seeks to convey: "the image that blind critics of Sangh create—that of lumpen elements, riotous mobs and bloodthirsty fanatics—is far removed from the reality of enlightened, highly trained, dedicated, selfless activists who sacrifice their most loved interests to work for the society, their motherland" (Sharda 2018).

29 Consider also, the different attitudes towards blood maintained by the RSS and the Shiv Sena. Unlike Shiv Sainiks who contrast themselves as "people of blood" to Gandhi as a "man of excrement," the RSS has tried to appropriate Gandhi, ahimsa and all (Heuze 1992:2261). Where the Shiv Sena explicitly rejects Brahmanical values, Golwalkar—who was just one of the RSS's elite, high-caste Brahmin leaders—claimed that a key font of Hindu virtue was located precisely in its aversion to bloodshed. An RSS tract states that while Marx, Hitler and Mao Zedong were able to change societies, in doing so they "left millions dead" (Kumar 2017:37). Men of the "true Hindu vision," however— "whether Buddha, Adi Sankara or Dr Hedgewar"—were "able to change the society without blood shed" (Kumar 2017:37). Indeed, while RSS volunteers hail from many different backgrounds, the RSS, unlike other Hindu Right outfits such as the Shiv Sena, has been traditionally Brahmin-dominated, with its origins among the Maharashtrian Brahmin community (Sarkar 1996:172). As Hugh Urban (2018) and Anthony Good (2016) have noted, Hindu nationalists tend to be at the forefront of campaigns to ban blood sacrifice in the form of animal killings. For all that, the RSS joins the Shiv Sena in its enthusiastic and longstanding promotion of blood donation activities.

30 Thus, it is apparent that the analogical transferability of the soldier's blood sacrifice and the citizen's blood donation helps mediate ahimsa-related Brahmanical elements of Hindutva and its otherwise bloody imperatives, particularly in the case of some RSS volunteers. For the RSS, blood donation mediates between the bloodless symbolism of sacrifice and actual practices of bloody sacrifice. If Moonje, as we saw, called for the reintroduction of blood sacrifice as all the better for Hindus to reacquaint themselves with the taste for blood, in Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi's (2012) analysis, disavowed Hindu

logics of blood sacrifice in fact resurface in episodes of communal violence. In our argument, these logics rematerialize in the less destructive form of blood donations.

31 Returning once more to the RSS's Dr. Hedgewar Blood Bank, we witness a similar entanglement of violent/non-violent ideological underpinnings. We met three RSS volunteers in Delhi who either had participated in its foundation or whose task it was to represent the blood bank and publicize its activities in the capital and beyond. One of them explained to us that, in addition to Hedgewar himself, it is the mythical sage Dadhichi who serves as a major sacrificial inspiration for the blood bank.[24] Indeed, Golwalkar, as we noted earlier, directly equated Hedgewar's transfusion of his life-blood to society with Dadhichi's prior bodily sacrifice. Dadhichi, as recounted in the *Brahmana Purana* and in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*, was renowned for his penances and *tapas* (austerities). As a great *tapasvi* (ascetic), he had transformed his body into that which was *pavitra* (pure), *tejisvi* (glorious) and, critically, immensely strong. To counter the dangerous threat of a demon king, he allowed his bones to be used to craft weapons. Thus, having made a supreme bodily sacrifice, he is frequently invoked in Hindu contexts as the "first body donor" and as a fitting exemplar for use in promoting donation of biological materials. For Hindutva purposes, he is also a fittingly martial figure: his bodily donation, after all, was for the construction of weapons. Dadhichi, we were told by one of the volunteers

> believed in non-violence. But when the country is in danger, violence becomes legitimate...He spent his whole life meditating on peace, so to give his bones for war was a supreme sacrifice. We compare blood donation to this. I would be happy that my blood is benefiting others, even in another continent... humanity is one. But it is not always that a Hindu gives for anyone. When abnormal conditions like war are present, or an ideological fight or crisis like the Iraq crisis and there is demand for blood from both sides, then one has to think – is it going to be used for good or bad purposes. A follower of Dadhichi gives blood for whoever we think protects humanity. I, for example, could never donate blood for the Pakistan army.[25]

We see then how the martial nature of Dadhichi's sacrifice seeps into understandings of Hindu nationalist blood donations. In the *swayamsevak*'s retelling, part of what made Dadhichi's sacrifice supreme was his otherwise central concern with non-violence. It was meditating on that subject that had, paradoxically, made his bones so strong and ideal for use as weaponry. Such ambivalences and intertwining sum up RSS blood donation activities well. The *swayamsevak*'s statement also reminds us of the RSS's particular interest in donating blood during wars and for soldiers. Dadhichi allowed his body to be used as a weapon in a "just war,"' what Kautilya's *Arthashastra* calls a *dharma-yuddha* (Gittinger 2011:25). The anonymity of voluntary blood donation is conventionally associated with a movement beyond categories: the blood will be used for *anyone*; boundary-marking norms are taken to be disrupted through such flows. The *swayamsevak*, however, references both this transcendental promissory impulse ("humanity is one") and its breakdown ("I...could never donate blood for the Pakistan army"). In the denouement, his fascination lies in a different kind of promise, one that is sacrificial and Hindu national: "Dadhichi is the only example where a man donates his bones for weapons, when for the whole of his life he had been meditating on non-violence. But in defeating the demons, his bones gave life to the nation." The RSS's preoccupation with voluntary blood donation especially *during war* no doubt contributes to its signaling of nationalist virtue, as discussed above, but it also

instantiates a second mediation: if its *anonymity* is in alignment with its claim to espouse a message of universal humanity (Bhatt 2001:176), its *temporality* (the particular political moment in which it is given) facilitates its fantasy of "defeating the demons" through a sacrifice that will give life to the nation.

Temporal Continuums

Histories in/of Blood

32 Urban (2018:158) correctly argues that we should consider blood sacrifice as not only a deep structural logic of enduring significance across the subcontinent—though it is that, too—but also an "instrument of struggle": "a discursive weapon wielded amid a complex field of competing narratives and counternarratives." We have suggested that such competing imperatives and intuitions are encapsulated within the act of blood donation in Hindutva contexts. The Hindutva blood donation is a marker of difference as well as an exhortation towards assimilation. It reveals a virile desire for bloodshed even as it draws upon a symbolism of restraint and non-violence. And further, as we describe below, it is "temporally indiscrete." Hindutva blood donations point backwards towards prior shedding, while at the same time pointing forward, threatening future spillage.

33 To elaborate, histories of the anti-colonial struggle generally have been written along three axes: the first foregrounds the role of Indian elites as collaborators in colonial rule, the second lauds the anti-colonial ideologies of Gandhi and the secular Indian National Congress, and the third (in response to the first two), emphasizes subaltern consciousness and practices that are not easily assimilable into the pan-Indian categories of nationalism, secularism or religion (Chakrabarty 2000). The pre-Independence founders and leaders of Hindutva do not have a privileged position in any of these narratives; they are either considered irrelevant, or as more committed to securing Hindu interests than opposing colonial rule. Thus, Hindutva nationalists find it difficult to pinpoint a lineage for their own brand of nationalist politics in all three dominant accounts of India's late colonial and postcolonial history (Udaykumar 2005). Blood donation drives by Hindu nationalist organizations are designed precisely to ameliorate this anxiety and to write Hindutva, in and through blood, back into Indian history.

34 Such a strategy relies on an imagined ability of blood to authorize and verify national commitments. As with the Shiv Sena and RSS blood camps, this form of Hindutva politics demands *actual* hematic excorporations to be effective. Through spectacularized acts of giving, Indian politicians and activists underscore an association between themselves and the national good through the witnessed offering of their blood. Such offerings are "material reports" of their historical importance and long-standing embodied commitments to the nation.[26] In their work on the politics of gift giving, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Olga Sosnina (2004) downplay the typical anthropological problematic of reciprocity in gift settings, emphasizing instead the ability of gifts to demonstrate facts: "matters of fact" are demonstrated through the giving of "facts of matter." While Indian political activists certainly offer blood with the hope of reciprocity in the form of their own political advancement, Ssorin-Chaikov and Sosnina's argument concerning the irreducibility of giving to reciprocity helps

illuminate a second dynamic at play: of blood materially and substantially verifying the truth of Hindutva political commitment. Take for example how, in his book on the RSS, the organization's former Vice-President H.V. Seshadri (1998) lists the blood banks that his organization manages, declaring that "invoking of patriotic sentiments and not material incentives is at the back of our success" (P. 210). The "selfless service" of Hindu nationalist activists is emphasized: "In Mangalore, an emergency request from the district surgeon came to the Swayamsevaks [RSS' "national volunteers"] held behind bars during the 1975-1977 Emergency. In the course of a few hours, blood from sixty Swayamsevaks was provided to the needy in the district hospital." During "national calamities" such as train accidents and earthquakes, Swayamsevaks can be relied upon to rise to the occasion and donate blood (Seshadri 1998:271). Seshadri lists numbers of activists who donated, total bags collected, and so on. Enumeration here serves as demonstration—demonstration of a desired association.

35 Blood donation, then, helps produce a positive association between the RSS and the nation, with the former demonstrated to be indispensable to the latter. Scholars such as Gerard Heuze (1992), Thomas Hansen (1999) and Christophe Jaffrelot (1996) have pointed to activists' unease with external perceptions of the Sangh Parivar's contributions to the nation. We see something of this in Seshadri's (1998) concern with the portrayal of the RSS in the news media: when the RSS helps in national emergencies, "they never ask for anything in return—not even a picture in the *Weekly*" (P. 257).[27] In another article we find that RSS blood donations after a terrible rail accident in the Punjab "won the praise of all. And yet, except a small English daily in Delhi, no other major newspaper published what the selfless volunteers of RSS have done."[28] In such gestures, RSS publications use blood imagery to complain about the erasure of the RSS from Indian history, while in the same gesture they write themselves into the nation's momentous events. As another example, RSS literature has complained of a lack of recognition of how, in 1947, the organization was instrumental in restoring Jammu and Kashmir to India. Many *swayamsevak*s are said to have been killed: "One feels a wave of sacrifice in one's mind while wishing to touch the blood-red soil of Palandhari where the soldiers and the RSS workers shed their blood. Repeated salutes to such brave sacrifices."[29] Hindu nationalist blood donations thus enact material reports of patriotic commitment and selfless service. Such service does indeed gain them recognition. The mainstream political commentator Varsha Bhosle, for example, declares that he refuses to criticize the RSS because they "have been and are busy setting up blood banks, schools and hospitals in rural areas, aiding the cyclone-affected, etc."[30]

36 We can expand our understanding of Hindutva's material-hematic historiography through our ethnographic fieldwork at an exhibition of portraits in blood in honor of anti-colonial icon Subhas Chandra Bose.[31] There exist several accounts of Hindutva's appropriations of historical figures, including the socialist atheist Bhagat Singh, Rani Gaidinliu (Longkumer 2010), Ambedkar (Guru 1991) and other Dalit heroes (Narayan 2009), amongst others. Bose is another figure from the conventional anti-colonial nationalist pantheon now appropriated as a Hindu nationalist icon.

37 "*Tum mujhe khun do, main tumhen azadi doonga*"— "Give me your blood, and I will give you freedom." These words, spoken by Bose at a political rally in Burma in 1944, are some of the most quoted in relation to the Indian anti-colonial struggle. At the time of their utterance, their purpose was to stimulate a willingness on the part of the Indian

masses to engage in armed struggle in order to end colonial rule. Our aim is not to rehearse this familiar narrative of Bose's invocation of blood as anti-colonial metaphor. Rather, our interest is in what this invocation precipitates in a contemporary political world. For Hindutva ideologues, valorizing Bose's insurgency as armed, masculine and violent allows for a counter-narrative to an anti-colonial struggle dominated by Gandhi —a figure with which the Hindu Right has had a fraught relationship. As resurrected by Hindutva history, Bose is counterpoised to the effeminacy and weakness of Gandhian nonviolence and exhibited as a more proper exemplar for India in the present. In what follows, we describe why Bose's exhortation toward a nationalism coagulated by blood-sacrifice makes him particularly appealing to contemporary Hindutva ideologues. Our focus is on an example of blood portraiture that was directly inspired by Bose's utterance—an exhibition of blood portraits staged in Delhi's Red Fort in 2009. The subjects of the portraits, including Bose among them, were "freedom fighter" martyrs —sacrificial heroes of the Independence struggle. The following details concerning the exhibition derive from our visits to it, where we spoke at length with its organizer and visitors, but also from newspaper accounts and the visitors' book, with its thousands of entries, to which we were given access.

38 The exhibition of blood-portraitures ran from October 2009 until the spring of the following year, drawing visitors in the hundreds of thousands (3-4,000 per day according to official figures). The sign outside the tin-roofed exhibition hall, framed by an elongated Indian tricolor, stated in Hindi and in English: "Exhibition of Blood Paintings of Young Martyrs." Most visitors were Indian; a good proportion of them had arrived on coach trips from the provinces, visiting the Red Fort as part of a nationalist itinerary that included other notable sights in the capital. It was Bose's famous utterance from which the organizer of the exhibition, Ravi Chander Gupta, took his original inspiration. Indeed, the very first portrait he gave his blood for—painted by his friend and colleague the artist Gurdarshan Singh Binkal—was of and for Bose, painted for Bose's birth centenary in 1997. Significantly, the painting was made in the physical presence of Delhi schoolchildren. For Gupta, a retired schoolteacher, the children's dispiriting ignorance of former patriotic sacrifices was one of the motivating factors behind the portraits: "The biographies of martyrs should be included in course curriculum. Paintings, posters and calendars of freedom fighters should be promoted so that more and more people know them and read about them." As one news report put it: "Gupta feels that very few people are aware about our freedom fighters and especially the youth."[32] Another reported that Gupta's organization hoped to take the 150-portrait "*shaheed*" exhibition across the country: "those born in the post-Independence era cannot feel the struggle of freedom fighters."[33] A selection of the eighteen books Gupta has written on the martyrs, several of which were published by the Indian government, were on display at the entrance to the exhibition alongside the visitors' book. In the mid-2000s he formed an organization, the Shaheed Smriti Chetna Samiti (Society to Awaken Remembrance of the Martyrs; henceforth "the samiti") to help look after the paintings, and to ensure they would be cared for after his passing. He lives alone; as he put it to us: "the martyrs are my family."

39 Speaking of the very first portrait for which he provided blood, that of Subhas Chandra Bose, Gupta told us: "I wanted to use my dearest thing (*sab se priya vastu*) – to offer it to Neta Ji. The dearest particle of my life—this is blood only. I can do this for him." Too young at the time of Bose's call, decades later Gupta is finally able to participate in a glorious cause. This is, then, a sacrificial portraiture: for the martyrs and for the nation.

Gupta recalled to us his days as a schoolteacher in a government school in east Delhi: "I felt the children knew nothing. They thought we achieved freedom without lifting a finger. They sang popular songs about Gandhi and ahimsa. They thought we got freedom without picking up a weapon! And so I said, well, I need to tell the children it's not true." This is, then, an explicitly anti-Gandhian project of re-education and historical revision. Nationalist historiography—at least in terms of its manifestation in school curricula—hinges on what Gupta sees as a Gandhian perversion, to be corrected, in part, by the exhibitions he stages. Memorials such as the Red Fort have been powerful sites of confrontation between Hindutva nationalists, secular elites and subaltern subjects (Kavuri-Bauer 2011). Gupta's organization aims to intervene in the negotiation process of collective memory in order to revivify and stabilize a particular body of remembrances. Specifically, an ongoing complaint of Hindutva activists has been that "secular" Indian historians have offered a false narrative of Indian history that appeases minority groups such as Muslims, while victimizing the Hindu majority that had been under Muslim domination in the pre-colonial period. Hindutva historiography thus strives to resuscitate an ancient, masculine and proud Hindu identity, one that does not fit well with Gandhian calls to nonviolence.

40 Leafing through the visitors' book with Gupta—a favorite occupation of his during the long days of the exhibition, at which he was always present—we asked him which, of the thousands of comments, he found most gratifying. He guided us unhesitatingly to the words of an 8-year-old schoolboy from Delhi: "These paintings are from the heart, when the time comes to sacrifice my blood for the protection of my country I will sacrifice my whole life." As Gupta put it to us: "This exhibition is to inspire the people to make sacrifices. Sacrifices are not all over now. You can still do it; you *should* still do it. The sacrifices are not only in the past; even in the future there is a time for sacrifice for the country." In other words, Gupta is calling for the re-temporalization of sacrifice. The paintings are thus a form of enactive remembering—depictions of blood sacrifice that perform the bleeding they represent and seek to inspire, a retort to "weak" Gandhian nationalism. And the retort appears to "work," in part, through their being imitative of the bleeding they seek to inspire. Gupta's art is mimetic in so far as "originary" blood sacrificers are paid homage to by bleeding in turn, but mimetic also in terms of the willingness to sacrifice one's blood that it is supposed to incite in the viewer.

41 Indeed, despite Gupta's often-professed broad and inclusive "secular" nationalism, his use of blood is caught within the symbolic universe of right-wing political mediations of blood as a biomoral substance. The transactional enframement of the blood painting, and its metonymic threat as a model very much *for* as well as *of* sacrificial bleeding are also features of a wider Hindutva politics. Such shared features should cause us to reconsider whether the samiti is in fact as broadly secular and inclusive as it is presented by its founders. While conducting fieldwork, we were informed by Gupta that he has recently received the promise of a permanent home for his portraits in Vrindavan at the ashram of female Hindu ascetic Sadhvi Rithambara. The location she has offered would place the portraits firmly under a Hindutva sign. Sadhvi Rithambara is a Vishwa Hindu Parishad activist of particular notoriety, well known for her anti-Muslim rhetoric and legally charged and widely regarded to have been instrumental in fueling the anti-Muslim tensions that resulted in the destruction of the Babri Masjid (Bhatt 2001:186; Hansen 1999:179–80). Indeed, her care of blood portraits

commemorating bloodshed would be entirely appropriate: during the Ayodhya agitations she is reported to have recited the following Hindi poem:

> May our race not be blamed
> And may our mothers not say
> That when we were needed, we weren't ready
> If there must be a bloodbath
> Then let's get it over with
> Because of our fear of a bloodbath before
> Our country was divided [at partition]
> Since their arrival until today
> They have killed so many Hindus
> We tried to appease them
> But there was bloodshed after all
> Instead of having it simmer slowly
> It's better to have it burst with a big flame
> If they don't understand our words
> Then we'll make them understand with kicks
> If there must be a bloodbath, then let it happen.
>
> (cited in Manuel 1996:132)

In 2010, Gupta took the Sadhvi up on her offer, and the National Martyrs Museum was opened within her sprawling NGO complex in Vrindavan. The inauguration of the samiti's exhibition was attended by the uppermost echelons of Hindu nationalist politicians, including current Prime Minister Narendra Modi, then BJP president Nitin Gadkari, Vishwa Hindu Parishad president Ashok Singhal, RSS leader Mohan Bhagwat, and BJP General Secretary Vijay Goel.[34]

42 Further, Sadhvi Rithambara's recontextualization of the paintings is explicitly anti-Muslim: "It is a rare work; the atrocities of past rulers have been exposed through portraits prepared in blood and it is praiseworthy; it is a symbol of committed patriotism."[35] The openness of the term "past rulers" is a well-known Hindutva category that seeks to encompass not only colonial rule, but also a putatively violent pre-colonial Muslim rule. Thus, despite Gupta's claims of a non-discriminatory politics, his close complicity with Hindutva figures poses questions about the samiti's claims to a secular universality. Explicitly, both Hindutva activists and Gupta's samiti share a commitment to a revisionist historiography that aims to foreground armed insurgents over nonviolent Gandhian satyagrahis. This revisionist impulse ties nonviolence together with weakness, effeminacy and passivity, foregrounding the masculine ethos of the insurgents, and finding in such insurgents a nascent commitment to a Hindu nation to come. Thus revised, Hindutva historiography calls upon past bloodshed to legitimize bloodshed in the present and threaten its possibility in the future. Through portraitures and donations, blood circulates in the Hindutva imaginary to clear the ground for a Hindu nation and community to come: one united by blood.

Past, Present and Future Bleeding

43 We return now to the Shiv Sena. We explain elsewhere (Copeman and Banerjee 2019:93) how the Shiv Sena's hematic engagements do not always go according to plan: we focus in particular, in that other work, on a massive blood donation camp organized by the Shiv Sena on Maharashtra Day in 2010, to which critics responded by stating that

rather than taking people's blood, the party should be providing them with substances of the civic such as water and electricity. Allegations were also made of forcible extractions taking place at the event. We focus here on a different aspect of the camp: its association with prior blood sacrifices. Headlined "Lata Mangeshkar to sing for Shiv Sena on Maharashtra Day," a news report publicized the imminent blood donation camp, explaining that the musical event referred to in the headline would be preceded by a

> Mahayagna of blood donation to commemorate the sacrifices made by the leading lights of the SMM [Samyukta Maharashtra Movement[36]] and the martyrs who fought successfully for carving out a separate state of Maharashtra with Mumbai as the capital from the erstwhile Bombay state. It is because of their sacrifice that we secured Mumbai and Maharashtra for the Marathis. Even now we are prepared to shed our blood for Mumbai, Uddhav [Thackeray, Shiv Sena leader] asserted. He appealed to all people to come out in large numbers and take part in the blood donation 'Mahayagna' on April 25 at Goregaon suburb in northwest Mumbai. He said that though the present generation was aware of the SSM, the future generations would remain ignorant if efforts were not made to enlighten them.[37]

As we have suggested, commemorating heroes through blood donations is a widely shared political idiom: for example, Congress activists donate blood on the death anniversary of the assassination of Indira Gandhi, quoting an instance of bloodshed of a different order. But consider the use of the term *mahayagna* (ritual sacrifice) by Uddhav Thackeray, which literalizes the sacrificial connection between different episodes of extraction. Like Moonje, cited earlier, the Shiv Sena explicitly makes a connection between blood sacrifice and the need to remasculate the nation; the emasculated community-nation will be rejuvenated through bodily sacrifices. The martyr, in this way of thinking, "fuses with his blood the symbolic unity of the collectivity" (Heuze 1992:2259). It is apparent that a peculiar dynamism marks how Hindutva movements connect their martyrologies with blood donation. Notice here an echo of Savarkar's (1989) original formulation: "Let this ancient and noble stream of Hindu blood flow from vein to vein till at last the Hindu people get fused and welded into an indivisible whole, till our race gets consolidated and strong sharp as steel" (P. 139). Notice also an echo of the logic of Golwalkar's (2000) question: "Is not every speck of our land protected and purified by the sacred blood of countless heroes and martyrs?" Animating the spirit of this question, blood donation events by present-day Hindutva activists generate a sense of *post hoc* participation in prior sacrifices (P. 89).

44 Consider also the following memorial blood donation event recounted to us by a Delhi-based RSS worker. While stationed in Punjab in the 1990s he was involved in organizing an RSS blood donation camp on 23 March, the day of Bhagat Singh's martyrdom (he was executed by the British on that day in 1931): 'That particular day is vivid in my eyes. His [Bhagat Singh's] sister was still alive then. We organized a blood donation camp, and she was the chief guest. When we made a list of the volunteers to donate blood, the blood bank people raised their hands saying, "It's impossible we can't take this much. We don't have any arrangements to do so much blood..." We said, "*Shaheedo ko yaad karen apna khun den* [We remember the martyrs by donating our own blood]." In the presence of a blood relative of one of the most renowned freedom fighters to have shed their blood in the cause of the nation, RSS members donated their blood. But that was not all. The *swayamsevaks* received, post-donation, a tilak of dust that had been brought

in a *kalash* from Bhagat Singh's cremation grounds. And so, in a dense tangle of the symbolic and the material, they received back bodily substance (their bodies as ash and blood, burned and spilled into the soil) from the very shaheed they had donated to. Initiating the circle of substantial exchanges of blood and soil, Bhagat Singh himself is reported to have gone to the site of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919, and to have "kissed the earth sanctified by the martyrs' blood and brought back home a little of the soaked soil."[38] No matter the militant socialism and atheism of Bhagat Singh: the Hindu Right reaches out to absorb such seemingly unsympathetic figures into its canon of Hindu nationalist virtue.

45 Consider also how the VHP and its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, conduct massive annual blood donation camps on November 2 to mark "Sacrifice Day"—the day the first incident of firing on *karsevaks* took place in Ayodhya.[39] Dibyesh Anand (2011:130) gives an account of Hindutva memory work in respect of the Ram Janmabhumi movement. A VCD he purchased from a stall at the disputed site in Ayodhya celebrates the martyrs of the movement, with the slogan: "*Bhakto ka seene pe goliyan khaana, mandir ke khatir khoon bahaana, dekho Ram ke sache bhakton, 6 Dissambar bhool na jaana* [The devotees who braved bullets in their chest, who sacrificed blood for the cause of the temple; True followers of Rama remember, never forget 6 December]." A Bajrang Dal leader reports on the expansion of his organization's hematic memorialization activities: "While we used to have about 5,000 volunteers in our camps, this year, we are targeting about 1 lakh volunteers who would donate blood."[40] Indeed, memorialization of Hindutva activists who fell in Ayodhya in 1992 forms a major focus of Hindutva blood donation activity across the country.[41]

46 At one of these camps at the Jamshedpur blood bank in Bistupur on the occasion of Hutatma Diwas, in which a total of 151 units of blood was reportedly collected, the VHP Mahanagar President, Arun Singh stated that "the VHP and Bajrang Dal is committed for construction of Ram Mandir."[42] On one level the statement appears merely congruent with—an example of—our earlier argument about blood extractions making commitments visible. Here, Hindutva activists' blood donations show, and underscore, their commitment to the building of a temple. But while the event evidently looks backward to the blood sacrifices of *karsevaks*, it also explicitly looks forward to the building of the temple. In this light the camp seems also to take the form of a threat, with activists' blood donations to be understood as synechdochal instances of the future bloodshed they presage. Notably, the Shiv Sena mouthpiece, *Samna*, was full of talk of blood sacrifice even prior to the violence here recalled, seeming to will it into being, and certainly helping to precipitate it. An editorial published the day before the destruction of the Babri Masjid proclaimed that "the Sariyu River had once turned red with the blood of the *Ram Bhakts* (disciples of the God Ram) and it is going to happen again with the blood of the *Kar Sevaks* (religious work as worship). Prepare for this martyrdom for the sake of the future of the country" (cited in Mehta 2009:7). We witness a hematic-mimetic continuum: prior bloodsheds, to be recalled and re-enacted ("it is going to happen again") in the fight to demolish the mosque, which duly enacted, is recalled and re-enacted once more in the form of the blood donation memorial event, which in turn expresses a metonymic commitment and intention to shed more of the substance for the cause in the future. If we also consider the allegation made by the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti that "Hindu blood" was used to color the stones of the mosque in its construction, the extent to which the mimetic shedding of blood governs the

historical imagination of the Hindu right comes even more fully into view.[43] Events such as these simultaneously look backwards, appropriating anticolonial heroes, and forward, in intimating future extractions: the blood donation unbound.

Consanguineal Plasma

47 The usefulness of thinking of blood's metaphorical and material potency again becomes especially clear if we consider the recent attempts by the Indian government to establish a religious basis to citizenship claims from those that live outside the nation-state. The Citizenship Amendment Act has become the most recent materialization of an imagined and enforced historical consanguinity. Take for example Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reassurance at a rally in Assam to the region's Bengali speaking Hindus that their fears of being excluded as immigrants by new citizenship requirements were unfounded, because he believed that the color of their shared blood relations with the nation's Hindus was more important than the color of their passports (Apoorvanand 2019). If blood serves as the grounds of citizenship, messy complexities of determining the citizenship of inhabitants of uncertain frontiers can be substituted with a simple conceptual blood test. This blood test, of course, carries on the tradition of Hindutva mobilizations of the substance. The test is not biological or DNA-based but asks about the allegiance of the citizen to the idea of an original Hindu consanguinity. That is, the CAA is a punitive legal manifestation of a long-standing claim we have described in this paper—that ancient inhabitants of India shared a common blood-tie, only recently betrayed and broken by the recent conversion of some to Islam. Because of this shared consanguinity, Muslims could return to the fold, if only they were to give up their allegiance to Mecca. The implications of this Hindutva's knotting together of geography and blood (based on an implicit assumption that Muslim blood had now been recently contaminated by conversion) reveals itself in the logic of the CAA. Because of their blood-betrayal, they cannot legitimately claim citizenship by default. And by association, nor should their supporters: anti-CAA protestors were all "anti-national" because they question Hindutva's hematological geography.

48 Take for instance a campaign song released by the BJP in February 2020, before the Delhi Assembly elections.[44] The song (in Hindi) is a rousing defense of the idea of an "Akhand Bharat."[45]

> They left cracks, in this undivided India.
> The same thing, we will never accept again.

Predictably, from what we have argued in this paper, the call for uniting a blood-community always comes with a threat of blood spillage against those who do not belong:

> This blood of Shiva, That flows in your veins,
> Is boiling, Telling everyone now.

Notice the uncanny echo of the theme of the boiling of Hindu blood, an echo that is so insistent that it may be considered a vital trope of Hindutva rhetoric. We have described this trope's appearance in the rally of a VHP sadhu in Hardwar, during the destruction of the Babri Masjid and the events leading up to Godhra and, most recently, in Modi's speech leading up to his retaliatory attacks on Pakistan. The idea is that this long-dormant blood provoked finally into heat carries with it the premonitory threat of

bloodshed, a threat carried out time and again in India's postcolonial history, and most recently against Muslims in Delhi as retaliation against anti-CAA protests.

49 The same campaign song also reveals the attempt by Hindutva adherents to insert themselves into an anti-colonial history from which they find themselves excluded:

> You are Subhash [Chandra Bose], you are Bhagat [Singh],
> You are Azad [freedom fighter Chandrashekhar Azad],
> You are Gandhi's non-violence,
> And [Maharana] Pratap's sword.
> You are Bhim's [Bhimrao Ambedkar's] law,
> Sardar's determination.

Here, these lyrics appropriate not only Bose (as we have described in detail earlier) but also, dizzyingly, draw in Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekar Azad, Maharana Pratap's sword and Dr. Ambedkar. We described how Hindutva blood donation camps often work at a slight remove but always related to projects of violence, allowing Hindutva organizations to distance themselves from accusations of directly enacting violence. Here too, blood—as a substance of sacrifice—carries the symbolic capacity to make meaningless the distinction between a politics of violence or of non-violence, writing Hindutva back into an anti-colonial history with which it is not otherwise closely associated.

50 Further, with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the polarization of opinion around the CAA began to map itself onto the carriers of the disease. At the beginning of the epidemic, the spread of the virus was traced to a gathering of Tablighi Jamaat members. The backlash from the media and the police was immediate. Hashtags of "coronajihad" were soon trending on social media, as were comparisons of the Jamaat members with suicide bombers. In response, members in Tamil Nadu formed a *Plasma Tarteeb Jamat* (Plasma Coordination Group) to donate their antibody rich blood plasma for the purpose of treatment and research. The call for plasma donation came from Maulana Saad, a prominent leader of the movement against whom the Delhi government had filed charges of culpable homicide after the virus-spreading incident. Crucially, a doctor at the forefront of the volunteering campaign insisted on clarifying that the call had been to do their duty as *good citizens*, without the intent of recuperating the Jamaat's religious image. The manager of the Tablighi Jamaat's Lucknow branch similarly emphasized that this was more a humanitarian rather than a religious effort. The effort to donate was particularly striking as it took place during the month of Ramzan. Jamaat community leaders informed its members that they could make an exception and break their fast to donate blood, making up the lost day later.[46] By emphasizing their humanitarian duty, their civic role as citizens, and by breaking religious protocols, the Jamaat sought to demonstrate its own flexibility and philanthropic capability.

51 The response of the Tablighi Jamaat members to donate their antibody-rich blood plasma must be understood within the history of the communalization of blood donation we have traced in this paper. Recall our description of the editors of the *Milli Gazette*'s response to Praveen Togadia's claim that contemporary Indian Muslims had betrayed an original *unified* blood-tie with their Hindu brethren by looking to Mecca. The editors had responded in the same language of consanguinity, intending (contra Togadia) to legitimize religious difference. This hematic strategy (of consanguinity indicating a common humanity without assimilating forms of difference) explains the

maneuver of Jamaat members to assert their consanguinity with the nation without relinquishing their religious identity.[47]

52 Further, earlier in this paper we described how Hindutva organizations sought to legitimize themselves as non-violent and philanthropically minded by organizing large blood donations camps. They did so while simultaneously accusing Muslims of not doing the same. The act of the Tablighi Jamaat members must also be understood through the lens of this historical characterization. Like the *Milli Gazette* editors, they too sought to re-establish a proper bio-moral relation between blood and community, one founded on a conception of a shared humanity within which religious difference remained legitimate. If the *Milli Gazette* editors recognized that this relation had come under pressure after the Godhra massacre, the Jamaat members recognized that it had come under further stress in the protests and counter-protests around the CAA. Their gesture was a materialization of the editors' call to recognize a common sanguinity that did not necessarily dissolve legitimate religious difference. That is, if the editors of the Gazette sought to establish a metaphorical consanguinity with their Hindu brethren, the Jamaat's actions generated material evidence (blood plasma) of a shared humanity.

Conclusion

53 This paper has shown that if Hindutva's ideologues look backwards to conceptualize an essential continuity between Hindu nationalism and India as a territorial formation, contemporary adherents materialize this conceptual work across present practices and into an imagined future. For example, contemporary Hindutva actors work with blood to establish a place for past ideologues in the anti-colonial struggle, establishing their present political legitimacy. This history, refigured through blood, then recursively becomes the grounds for Hindutva practices in the present. Present actors exteriorize and circulate actual blood, entangling the conceptual and the material. Such material deployments work in different ways for organizations across the Hindutva-spectrum. For more radical groups blood works to valorize and precipitate violence. For those that present mainstream respectability, deployments of blood mediate a proximal espousal of non-violence with a distal legitimization and participation in nationalist violence. Across such invocations, the violent materiality of blood is offered as a corrective to a "secular" historiography alleged as biased towards Gandhian nonviolence and the Indian National Congress. As a corrective, past Hindutva ideologues and contemporary activists fuse the conceptual and the material to precipitate and threaten bloodshed against ideological non-adherents. That is, they recall prior bloodshed, in order to lay down a commitment to future bloodshed in the cause of the (Hindu) nation. Present-day bleeding then becomes a way of sustaining the vitality of a prior epoch, with all its connotations of affective and divisive nationalist plenitude.

54 Our effort in this paper has been to examine the long history of the conceptual invocations of blood by various Hindutva ideologues and activists, and the slippery enactment of these invocations in political camps, art and blood banks. To be clear, we do not argue here that Hindutva deployments of blood are the pre-eminent demonstration of the movement's political imagination. Nor do we wish to claim that the deployment of blood is specific to Hindutva's brand of nationalism in the region. Indeed, elsewhere we track its lively presence amongst those directly opposed to

Hindutva politics, as well as amongst the spectrum of Indian party politics (Copeman 2013b; Copeman and Banerjee 2019). Our more modest claim in the paper is this: blood is a particularly useful entry-point for tracking Hindutva thought and practice because the substance clarifies with precision the effort of Hindutva actors to reframe and rewrite Indian history and geography. In particular, thinking about Hindutva's uses of blood helps to describe the movement's ongoing search for legitimacy, its slippery relationship with the respectability of violence, and its effort to reconstruct India as a homogenized territorial and historical formation.

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NOTES

1. The authors would like to thank Nathaniel Roberts, the article reviewers, and the editorial and production team at *SAMAJ* for their help and input. While this essay draws on and systematizes some material presented in Copeman (2004, 2013a) and Copeman and Banerjee (2019) on blood and Hindu nationalism, the majority of its material is presented for the first time and it develops a wholly new argument.

2. More broadly, Sharma contextualizes Savarkar's imagination as part of a broader Hindu nationalist movement to reconceptualize notions of substance purity and pollution in order to re-emasculate Hindus supposedly enfeebled by past Muslim rule.

3. The RSS is a radical, ultranationalist organization founded in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. Present day Hindutva political parties look to the RSS for "moral guidance" and for mobilizing their support base.

4. Cited in *Times of India*, October 19, 2000.

5. http://siafdu.tripod.com/fernandes.html

6. Banguru Laxman, quoted in *The Week*, September 10, 2000. "Respect" afforded to Muslims due to their supposed blood-tie with Hindus is additionally problematic because it is a "respect" that exists "not because they are Muslims and believe in Islam but because, in a more fundamental sense, they are not Muslims!" (Vanaik 1997:309).

The Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party) was founded in 1980 and is affiliated to right-wing Hindu groups, principally the RSS. It headed the National Democratic Alliance coalition that was ousted from office in the 2004 elections. It heads the current Indian government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

7. *Outlook*, November 22, 2002. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), founded in 1964, pursues a staunchly Hindutva-based agenda.

8. Gazette Staff. 2002. "Interview: Dr Pravin Togadia." *Milli Gazette* (vol. 3. no. 20), October 16-31. Retrieved on October 30, 2020 (https://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15102002/1510200233.htm).

9. See Rao, Ramesh, et. al., 2000: Chapter 2.

10. The HSS–the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh–is an RSS offshoot with a focus on Hindus in the diaspora. On Hindu nationalist *seva* activities in diasporic contexts, see Zavos (2015).

11. Of course, this is baseless, and it is not difficult to find counter examples. For example, when in September 2002 Islamic militants shot dead twenty-eight worshipers at the Swaminaryan temple in the Akshardham temple complex in Gandhinagar in Gujarat, the director of a local blood bank drew attention to the many Muslims queuing to donate blood to help the Hindu victims (http://in.christiantoday.com/template/news_view.htm?code=gen&id). On the other hand, and also in Gujarat, soon after the extreme sectarian violence that engulfed the state in 2002, a blood bank in urgent need of blood went to a Hindu guru and was provided with 200 donations: "As the camp was finishing [the guru] told me his devotees had requested the blood go only to Hindus. I said, No way!" (see Copeman 2009a:171).

12. See account in (Copeman 2009b:4–5).

13. Informal interviews with *swayamsevak*s took place in New Delhi, 2003-2005.

14. Government and commercial blood banks tend to be attached to hospitals, whereas NGO blood banks—the two that operated in Delhi at the time of our fieldwork, run respectively by the Indian Red Cross Society and the Rotary Club, have recently been joined by a third, run by the Lions Club—tend to be "stand-alone." Theoretically, one can donate voluntarily at any of these blood banks, though only government and NGO blood banks are allowed to take donor beds to donors, that is, to conduct voluntary blood donation camps at different locations. Delhi's Red Cross blood bank, located in the symbolic heart of the city opposite the Indian parliament (Lok Sabha), is the busiest blood bank in the capital, and one of the oldest. It conducts voluntary blood

donation camps almost daily. While the blood collected by the Red Cross, like every other blood bank, is subject to a "processing charge," it provides some of the cheapest blood in the city. To single it out as being in some way pathologically commercial vis-à-vis other blood banks in the city could hardly be more misleading.

15. At the launch of the SJM, the executive committee of the RSS expressed its "deep concern at throwing open the door for foreigners and multinational companies in the name of economic liberalisation" (*Organiser*, July 4,1991). Jaffrelot (1996:492) asserts that VHP religious leaders explicitly endorsed the launch. Since its inception, the SJM has published literature attacking the WTO and liberalization as part of a "mass awakening program," it has organized boycotts of MNCs, encouraged the taking of vows to use only swadeshi products, forced the government of Maharashtra to withdraw from an agreement with Enron to provide electricity, organized swadeshi trade fairs, and passed resolutions on "Cultural Invasion through Media," patent laws and on the situation of weavers (http://www.swadeshi.org/movement.htm). *[Defunct]*

16. The trope which describes Christianity's nefarious promise of material benefits to induce conversion is familiar enough (Roberts 2016).

17. *Hindu Janajagruti Samiti*, March 17, 2008.

18. The connection between the temperature of Hindu blood and a (necessary) propensity towards violence (albeit figured as defense) is explicit in the words of a non-activist middle-class Hindu professional, voiced in Gujarat during the carnage of 2002. They reiterate the longstanding Hindu Right complaint about the supposed movement of "love jihad" among India's "handsome" Muslim men marrying "innocent" Hindu women: "I personally feel they're spoiling the lives of these Hindu girls. Our blood gets hot. We can't stand them...It's time that the Hindus fight violence with violence" (Anand 2011:146).

19. Months later, responding to the BJP government's decision to render Article 370 ineffective, political scientist Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2019) wrote a widely circulated newspaper editorial titled: "The Story of Indian Democracy Written in Blood and Betrayal."

20. These gendered implications of blood donation intersect with class and relative socio-economic statuses. The urban poor often express their reluctance to donate by connecting their poverty with having "less blood." What they see as their deficient blood quantum is likely be linked to the sorts of work they perform: "I'm a labourer, I have no blood."

21. https://www.facebook.com/Dr-BR-Ambedkar-Blood-Donors-Association-JalandharPunjabIndia-1828140684104953/

22. Tribune Staff. 2006. "Blood bond." *The Tribune*, September 25. Retrieved on October 30, 2020 (https://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20060925/region.htm).

23. http://hinduunity.org/hitlist.html *[Defunct]*

24. See Copeman (2006) for a fuller account of Dadhichi and his use as an exemplar to organizations tasked with promoting cadaver donation.

25. Informal interviews with *swayamsevak*s took place in New Delhi, 2003-2005.

26. Heuze (1992) notes how for the Shiv Sena its management of a highly efficient blood bank is a means to "gain recognition" and promulgate a positive image for the party by making apparent their "care for society and nation" (P. 2261).

27. Seshadri is probably referring to the Indian news publication, *Illustrated Weekly.*

28. http://www.hvk.org/articles/1298/0003.html

29. http://www.rss.org/rss-ksmr.htm

30. http://www.rediff.com/news/may/30varsha.htm

31. Here our ethnographic account builds on an earlier paper (Copeman 2013a) on memorial blood portraiture. However, where in the earlier paper we focused on the portraits as figures of representational and mnemonic complexity, here we seek specifically to unpack their Hindu nationalist charge.

32. *Mid-Day*, January 25, 2008.

33. *Rediff*, January 3, 2006.

34. *Vrindavan Today*, October 21, 2010.

35. *Rediff*, January 3, 2006.

36. The Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, or United Maharashtra Committee, was "an organisation that spearheaded the demand in the 1950s for the creation of a separate Marathi-speaking state out of the (then-bilingual) state of Bombay in western India, with the city of Bombay as its capital" (Roncaglia 2013:189).

37. http://news.in.msn.com/national/article.aspx?cp-documentid=3772834

38. https://www.hindujagruti.org/history/4306.html

39. *Hindu Janajagruti Samiti*, September 21, 2014.

40. *Times of India*, September 18, 2014.

41. In 2014, for instance, it was reported that "A blood donation camp had been organized on September 2 2014 by Viswa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal at... Siliguri...in memory of Koubari brothers (Rama and Sarat) who sacrificed their live as Karsewak from West Bengal" (https://www.enews.abtak.net/current-news-analysis/blood-donation-camp-organised-by-vhp-and-bajrangdal-at-siliguri). In Mangalore, in the same year, "The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal join hands to organise a blood donation camp on November 2nd... VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders along with other dignitaries of society, and many other notables will attend the event, informed the VHP president Jitendra Kottary. He was speaking at a press conference in the city on Wednesday, October 30 during which he said, every year this blood donation camp is organised to commemorate the martyrdom of Ayodhya fight martyrs" (https://www.kannadigaworld.com/news/karavali/111792.html).

42. *Avenue Mail*, November 2, 2016.

43. "Hamilton writes in the Barabanki Gazetteer 'Jalalshah used stones from Lahore coloured with the blood of Hindus in the construction of the mosque.'" https://www.hindujagruti.org/hindu-issues/save-temples/ram-janmabhoomi

44. https://scroll.in/article/952033/more-hate-speech-bjps-new-campaign-song-for-delhi-pits-hindu-voters-against-muslim-protesters

45. On the idea of Akhand Bharat (Greater India) see the important accounts in Bayly (2004) and Longkumer (2020).

46. *Outlook*, May 4, 2020.

47. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52452468

ABSTRACTS

In this article we examine blood as a medium and metaphor for Hindutva's political transactions. Specifically, we identify three ways in which blood operates in Hindutva thought and practice. First, it serves to create a spatial geographic whole – an original Hindu nation whose inhabitants share the same blood. Second, blood serves to mediate between the violent and non-violent aspects of Hindu nationalism, authorizing and reconciling present acts of violence with a supposed Hindu capacity for heroic restraint. And third, blood serves to establish a temporal continuum between a Hindutva past, present and future, writing Hindu nationalist thought and action backwards into Indian history, and forwards to threaten future bloodshed against non-adherents. In these three ways, Hindutva imaginations and extractions of blood work through

each other. In present-day India, these three political manifestations of blood – as a marker of exclusion, as mediating non-violence, and as premonitory threat – have all appeared in the Citizenship Amendment Act controversy and around the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. As blood overflows through time and space, it threatens to erase difference and legitimize violence while further extending the ideology's reach.

INDEX

Keywords: sacrifice, blood, Hindutva, Hindu nationalism

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